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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 06 DAKAR 000196

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GUINEA BISSAU: ANNUAL TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

REF: A. A) STATE 2731

[B](#). B) DAKAR 164

SUMMARY

[1](#). (SBU) Guinea-Bissau is a source of children trafficked for begging primarily in Senegal. Muslim Koranic teachers or their intermediaries convince parents to send children purportedly for a religious education. Those children are routinely beaten and subjected to harsh treatment; often their families never hear from them again. There are no statistics or reliable estimates on the scope of the problem. The GOGB has the political will to combat this issue and, for the first time, has instituted jail time for parents who collude with traffickers. Police are proactive in stopping traffickers and assisting victims.

[2](#). (SBU) Children have been required to beg for food and money to receive education from Koranic schools for generations. Some fathers and community leaders who send children away to learn to read the Koran experienced similar situations, although abuse appears to be growing and education dwindling. Public discussion, radio programs, and solid NGO efforts, often in conjunction with police and government are making it harder for traffickers to operate. For the first time last year, villagers worked with local officials and NGOs to teach the Koran locally as an alternative to sending children away.

[3](#). (SBU) One NGO, "Associacao de Mulher e Crianca" (the Association for Women and Children, known as AMIC in Portuguese) leads coordination efforts for government, police, and civil society in terms of prevention and helping returned victims find their families, and holding parents accountable to the courts if their children become re-trafficked after participating in the reintegration program. END SUMMARY.

[4](#). (SBU) Responses are keyed to questions in reftel.

Begin TIP report:

PARA 27. OVERVIEW OF A COUNTRY'S ACTIVITIES TO ELIMINATE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

[A](#). Guinea-Bissau is a country of origin for trafficked children for forced begging, primarily to Senegal and to a lesser extent Mali and Guinea. Children are sent by their parents with a teacher, or someone purporting to represent a

teacher for Koranic studies. Key source areas are the predominantly Muslim areas of Bafata and Gabu in the east. Instead of getting an education, children are generally forced to beg and remit daily payments of anywhere from 50 cents to one U.S. dollar plus a kilo of rice to the teacher. Failure to meet daily quotas earns severe beatings. Some Koranic schools in Guinea-Bissau also require children to beg in the long-standing tradition of these schools, but with less abuse and more education than they get abroad.

No studies have been completed on the scope of human trafficking in or from Guinea-Bissau, and no reliable estimates exist. The GOGB in cooperation with NGOs, police, and international organizations repatriated 131 children from Senegal since 2005, including 62 in the first half of 2007, but there are many more. In one case last November, police stopped traffickers from moving 52 Bissau-Guinean children ages 6-11 into Senegal based on a tip-off in the town of Bafata. One organizer was apprehended and later released while the others escaped.

1B. Parents of young children are approached by religious leaders or intermediaries, usually from Guinea-Bissau, and offered the chance to send children for a religious education where they would be taught to read the Koran. Because of traditional links between Islamic communities across borders and the existence of extended families where distant relatives may be considered "uncles," the trafficker is often known to the parents. There are an increasing number of Koranic schools in Guinea-Bissau to meet the rising demand for education. A June 2007 UNICEF study documented 617 such schools throughout the country to serve as an alternative to sending children to Senegal. Koranic teachers are highly

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respected in Muslim society (the majority population in target areas) and are able to operate with little interference. Parents receive no compensation for sending their children and in many cases, pay for the initial travel. Also in some cases, children sent away are not wanted any longer, especially in the case of a second marriage where the new wife does not want to raise her husband's children with a first wife.

The primary route to Senegal is through the town of Pirada, where there are police and migration controls. Another key exit point is the town of Sao Domingos in the west. Almost all traffic is overland, reportedly by foot, taxi or animal driven carts to the border. Non-vehicular traffic can easily avoid border outposts by walking on foot trails through the bush. Border guards are aware of the problem and according to the leading national NGO on trafficking, AMIC, cooperate on interdiction and repatriation. Yet remoteness, low salaries that are sometimes unpaid for months at a time, and respect for Koranic teachers makes guards vulnerable to bribes.

Living conditions for trafficked children on the streets of Senegal's cities can be heartbreaking. Children who cannot raise the daily payment are beaten so severely that they often don't return, choosing to sleep in the street rather than face punishment. It is common for families to go years without receiving any word from children. Some children seek help from NGOs, neighborhood women whom they adopt as mother figures or the Bissau-Guinean Embassy in Dakar. Others simply walk back to Guinea-Bissau. Many make a go of it on their own, living in abandoned buildings and making due with begging as a profession. Some parents seek help from police or NGOs to reunite with children, but they are the exception.

Again this year, the number of children repatriated and reintegrated from Senegal is encouraging. Repatriations and reinsertion in families and schools require significant cooperation between NGOs, governments, police and border officials, families and schools.

1C. Political will exists to assist victims and prevent trafficking through raising awareness, especially in key

institutions such as the government's Institute of Women and Children, the Department of Justice, the Foreign Ministry, and among individuals throughout the police force. Despite the number of agencies that have a role, there is no high-level coordinated initiative to fight TIP. There has been a major improvement last year in terms of using jail to fight TIP. While no comprehensive trafficking law exists, police, courts, and AMIC cooperated in Gabu to put the fear of jail into parents that send children back to the streets after they have gone through the reinsertion program. One man who spent 72 hours in jail "got the message" according to the head of the regional court. When outcry about his punishment hit the national level President Joao Bernardo "Nino" Vieira publicly defended the jail term and pointed out the process followed a fair trial.

¶D. Guinea-Bissau lacks almost everything. The police commissariat in Gabu has one motorcycle for 87 officers. No formal police training has been offered to them since 1996. The police station does not have electricity -- but neither does the governor's office. The Government's Institute of Women and Children donated one bicycle to the police, but it broke and they lack either the parts, know-how, or gumption to fix it. Thanks to AMIC, twelve officers in Gabu receive periodic formal training on trafficking in children crimes and regular on-the-job training as they are incorporated into all of AMIC's local operations with parents and children.

While corruption is likely a factor in the remote towns and border areas, AMIC believes there is no high-level corruption on this issue, and no one in the Government is getting rich off the trafficking of children.

¶E. The GOGB does not make systematic efforts and does not publish assessments of its performance. A police inspector under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior has official responsibility for coordinating the government enforcement response and cooperation with UNICEF, but these efforts are poorly organized. The Minister of Interior, Baciro Dabo (he has since been replaced), traveled to the key source areas in Bafata and Gabu last year and spoke publicly and to the police officers in his charge about zero tolerance for child

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trafficking.

PARA 28. INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKERS

¶A. There has been no new legislation since the last report. There is no law specifically prohibiting trafficking in people. Other laws are currently being used, although they are weakly applied. Laws against removal of minors, sexual exploitation, abuse, and kidnapping of minors may be used to prosecute trafficking cases. Prostitution is illegal, as is pimping.

¶B. There is no trafficking law, but the law against kidnapping, which may be used in child trafficking, carries a penalty of two to ten years in prison.

¶C. Guinea-Bissau is not a source or destination country for labor abuses and as such has no specific legislation dealing with the crime. When children are exploited for labor, it is usually through promises of education that traffickers lure them into servitude, not through legitimate offers of employment with contracts.

¶D. The penalty for rape is between one and five years in prison. Sex trafficking is not specifically covered under the law and in fact does not appear to be a widespread problem in Guinea-Bissau.

¶E. The activities of the prostitute, brothel owner, pimp, and customer are all criminalized. There are no statistics on enforcement of this crime.

¶F. There have been no successful prosecutions of traffickers. Instead, local law enforcement is using the laws in place related to parental responsibilities for child protection to go after parents who send their children with traffickers. Police are keenly aware of their responsibility when it comes to protecting children from traffickers, and they often take appropriate action. In most cases, this involves coordinating with NGOs on repatriations. When these children, known as "talibes," go through the repatriation and reinsertion process, parents are required to sign a contract with the regional court that holds them criminally responsible for the safety of their children if they should be re-trafficked. In one case, after AMIC conducted the verification process, they found three children missing. Two of the fathers have not yet been located, but one father was arrested and spent 72 hours in jail. He was released when he agreed to find his child in Dakar and bring him home.

Men, often former talibes, from the regions of Bafata and Gabu are the primary traffickers. They may be teachers in Koranic schools, or they may say they are working on behalf of a teacher. In most cases, they are known to communities in which they operate, AMIC, and the police. Some have been photographed by police for the purpose of prevention. They operate in the open, protected by their stature in the Muslim community and the fact that politicians in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal do not have the temerity to confront them.

¶G. The Government does not provide any special training on trafficking but has said it welcomes any training that foreign governments or international organizations can provide.

¶H. Police in Gabu have worked with police in Senegal and Guinea (Conakry) in the past, but there were no records of joint investigations during the reporting period. The Government does not actively investigate most cases of trafficking, but police are proactive in stopping traffickers and assisting victims. A cooperative effort between police, courts, and AMIC work together to explain the law to parents and carry out enforcement actions when they allow their children to be re-trafficked.

¶I. The Government is not prohibited from extraditing its nationals but has no record of being asked to do so for TIP.

¶J. There is no evidence of government involvement in TIP.

¶K. Not applicable

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¶L. Not applicable

¶M. There is little tourism in Guinea-Bissau, and there are no reports of child sex tourism.

The Government has not ratified ILO Convention 182 concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.

ILO Conventions 29 and 105 on forced or compulsory labor were both ratified February 21, 1977.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography was signed on September 8, 2000 and is in the ratification process.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime was signed on December 14, 2000 but not yet ratified.

PARA 29. PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

¶A. A lack of resources keeps the Government from providing many services for victims. Benevolent individuals, some with the Government, some with police, and some NGOs, provide most other assistance.

¶B. The only care facility expressly for TIP victims is a rented house in Gabu. AMIC pays for the rent through its support from international NGOs and the GOGB. AMIC is seeking a permanent solution to this problem and post's TIP project proposal (ref B) would support this shelter.

¶C. Most significant funding comes from abroad, including PRM support to IOM for a regional repatriation and reinsertion program. The Government continues to contribute about USD 16,000 to AMIC's annual operating budget. It cooperates and coordinates closely with IOM, UNICEF, Save the Children (Dakar), SOS Talibe, and other foreign NGOs.

¶D. Police in the primary source areas of Gabu and Bafata coordinate closely with AMIC to assist victims and locate parents.

¶E. Not applicable.

¶F. Victims are not punished or persecuted in any way by anyone other than their traffickers.

¶G. Nothing impedes victims from seeking justice from their traffickers other than a cultural perception that Koranic teachers are above the law.

¶H. See above.

¶I. AMIC provides all training. Government agencies provide full cooperation with AMIC and attend any and all training events.

¶J. As noted above, the Government has no funds to support even a modest victim assistance program. It relies heavily on NGO and international donor support not just for TIP assistance, but for many basic government functions, including payment of civil service salaries. The Bissau-Guinean Embassy in Senegal is a leader in the fight against trafficking. It coordinates closely with NGOs in Senegal and the Red Cross to identify, assist, and repatriate victims. It uses its operating budget to fund assistance efforts and is reimbursed upon justification to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¶K. A non-exhaustive list includes the Red Cross, AMIC, RADDHO (Dakar), Save the Children (Dakar), UNICEF and IOM.

PARA 30. PREVENTION

¶A. The Government recognizes the trafficking problem and combats it on many fronts. The Government contributes eight million CFA francs (CFAF) (about USD 16,000) per year to the

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operating budget of AMIC, the country's strongest advocate in fighting trafficking of children.

¶B. With a number of security concerns in the country, such as increased international drug trafficking and the urgent need for security sector reform of the bloated, violence-prone military, and numerous social problems such as a lack of access to adequate education and health care for most of its citizens, TIP has not surprisingly been low on the priority list. However, even with these other issues, the Government is doing what it can with the few resources it has available to it. The Ministry of Interior has an inspector in charge of crimes against children who is responsible for coordination on law enforcement of TIP and

cooperation with UNICEF. The Institute of Women and Children has taken the lead with respect to public awareness and marshalling efforts of the government and the international community. The National Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee for Women's and Children's Issues continued to try -- but failed -- to get TIP on the legislative agenda. The most effective actors continue to be NGOs and international organizations.

AMIC conducts regular awareness efforts on radio stations in the Gabu area and through tireless visiting of villages in source areas. Guinea-Bissau's Ambassador to Senegal has also contributed to awareness efforts on the radio. These efforts are aimed at parents in Muslim communities, notifying them of the dangers of sending their children away for Koranic studies. One program aimed at prevention was the creation of evening Koranic studies after the regular school day. A group of religious village elders say they believe this has had a positive impact and they know of many children that come from nearby villages to study at night so they do not have to go as far away as Senegal for the religious education they seek.

1C. The relationship between GOGB, NGOs, police and border officials, and international organizations is excellent.

1D. The Government does not systematically monitor its borders for TIP, but border guards have been educated by AMIC. Immigration officials described a process they follow when they identify a potential trafficker: they detain the male adults if they cannot prove they are the fathers, contact the police in Gabu, and arrange transportation back to police headquarters in Gabu. Unfortunately, these are barely treated as crimes, and traffickers are generally released while parents are contacted to pick up their children.

As part of a PRM-supported reinsertion program for trafficking victims implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), AMIC, and Senegalese NGOs, the Government assists in repatriating and educating children and families to avoid re-trafficking. This program consists of educating parents, getting children in school, and follow-up visits to check progress and track children. A shelter rented by AMIC houses boys for up to one month while their parents are located. Migration officials at Pirada claim they do not let anyone leave the country with a child unless the parent is present, due to trafficking concerns. Of course the border remains porous, and guards may be corrupt or unprofessional.

1E. Relevant actors cooperate well and recognize the importance of close coordination. AMIC reports that it gets very good cooperation from local police in assisting repatriated children and finding parents and local police laud the strong work of AMIC to help them monitor villages to ensure victims are not re-trafficked. There are a good understanding of issues and updated policies by border police and migration officials to stop traffickers from moving children out of the country. AMIC and police work with religious and community leaders in the regions of Gabu and Bafata. Even the regional court, which was the biggest gap in the past, has started to play an instrumental role in making the parents understand that they will be held legally accountable if they send their children to beg in a foreign country. This is accomplished by serving as an intermediary to explain child protection laws to parents and requiring them to sign a contract in which parents of returned victims promise not to send their children away again under penalty of jail. AMIC monitors the agreement through visits to kids

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and one man has been jailed for 72 hours under this system.

1F. There is no national plan of action to combat TIP. Agencies involved include the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, and the Institute of Women and Children. There

is no task force; so no agency has a clear lead.

¶G. Not applicable

¶H. Not applicable

¶I. Not applicable

¶5. (U) The TIP officer for Guinea-Bissau, Gregory Holliday, who is resident in Dakar, Senegal, can be reached by phone at 221-33-823-4296 x2415 and by e-mail at hollidaygx@state.gov. Embassy TIP officer spent approximately 40 hours preparing for thisyear's TIPreport. Embassy Dakar Pol FSN spent abot 20 hours.

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